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CHINESE PROGRESS IN RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION, 1952

Huai Fu

During 1951 and up to the end of August 1952, a total of 1,255 kilometers of railway were constructed. During the past 3 years, over 10,000 kilometers of railway lines were put back into operation.

The 505-kilometer long Ch'eng-tu-Chungking line was finished some time ago /June 1952/; the T'ien-shui--Lan-chou line is in operation; the Chin-chou--Ch'-eng-te /Jehol/ line has been rebuilt, and work on the Lan-chow-- Sinkiang line was started on 1 October /1952/. The T'ien-shui--Ch'eng-tu railway is now in the process of rapid construction.

The construction of the Ch'eng-tu--Chungking Railway was started on 15 June 1950 and was completed 13 June 1952. By 1 July 1952, the whole line was opened for transportation.

The 347-kilometer line between T'ien-shui and Lan-chou is the westernmost section of the Lung-Hai Railway. It starts from T'ien-shui, in Kansu, and passes through the very rough terrain of Kan-ku, Wu-shan, Lung-hsi, Ting-hsi, and Yu-chung hsiens, including the gorges of the Wei Ho and the Ch'ing-shui Ho, where numerous bridges had to be built.

In this section there are, on an average, two and a half bridges and/or culverts and 30 meters of tunnels for each kilometer. In the course of construction, over 23 million cubic meters of earth and stone were excavated and over 1,000 culverts were built. The bridges, including 60 large and medium sized ones, totaled 4,395 meters in length. Over 40 tunnels were dug, one of which is 1,980 meters long. All materials such as sand and gravel, and even the water used in the building of these structures as well as for human consumption, were transported from long distances to the work sites.

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According to the Ministry of Railway's -- 1951 preliminary plans for the construction of this section, the railway was to be completed and ready for transportation in June 1953. However, the laying of the tracks was completed 10 months ahead of schedule and the line was completed and put into regular on 1 October 1952, 8 months ahead of the original target date.

When the Yellow River bridge [on the Peiping-Hankow line] was completed by French and Belgium builders 52 years ago, engineers set the highest safe rate of speed while crossing the bridge at 15 kilometers per hour. As a result of the many wars prior to liberation, the bridge had been so severely damaged that only a small locomotive pulling ten or less boxcars at a time was able to cross the bridge. It required 3 hours for a train to pass. Between 12 September 1949 and the end of October 1952, traffic on this bridge continued while repairs were being made. Upon completion of the repairs, the [permissible] weight of trains was raised from 600 tons to an unrestricted amount, and the speed of travel increased from 5 kilometers per hour to the present unlimited rate of speed. To cross the bridge it was no longer necessary to break up the trains into sections, and the crossing time was decreased to 22 minutes. More recently the time was further decreased to 5 minutes, which is 35 times as fast as when repairs were begun.

In 1952, the speed of passenger trains increased noticeably. In comparison with the 1951 speed, the Peiping-Hankow Express reduced its running time by 6 hours 30 minutes; the Peiping-Shanghai Express by 3 hours 12 minutes, and the Nanking--Lu-pin Express by 11 hours 32 minutes.

In the same period, railway rates were progressively reduced in line with the government's general economic policy of encouraging production. Apart from luxuries, for which the rates remained rather high, daily necessities, industrial equipment, agricultural implements and products, lumber, steel and iron, coal, and other mineral products were put in a low-rate class. The rate for the transport of coal, which is so basically important for practically all economic development, is set at below cost. Preferential rates are also granted to certain native products, particularly those for export.

The volume of rail transportation was increased continuously. As a result of unified transportation planning, the efficiency of operation has been constantly raised. In 1951, the volume of traffic was 8.6 percent greater than in 1950. This was 48.6 percent higher than the highest record made in the history of Chinese railways, while the figure set in the first half of 1952 was 11.9 percent higher than that of 1951.

In 1949, freight locomotives traveled an average of 278 kilometers per day. In 1951, this was increased to 374.6 kilometers which is 47.5 percent higher than the 254 kilometers per day record which was the highest performance in the previous history of the Chinese railways. In the first half of 1952, the record reached 416.6 kilometers per day.

In July 1952, the average net load per car increased 6 percent over the figure for the same month in 1951.

The turnaround time, 3.34 days in 1950, was decreased to 3.22 days in 1951, and further decreased to an average of 2.90 days in the first half of 1952.

Of the total number of freight locomotives in China in 1952, 29.5 percent covered 500 kilometers per day in April, and in July this proportion was raised to 43 percent.

The total length of railway lines in operation throughout China at the end of 1948 was 12,769 kilometers; and in October 1952, 23,858 kilometers.

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